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ABSTRACT

The focus of this newsletter is on the findings of a two-year nationwide study of adolescent girls. The study undertook to identify the wide variety of needs, aspirations, and concerns of young women 12- to 18-years old. Nine hundred and twenty women were interviewed in both rural and urban settings, representing a wide range of racial, religious, and ethnic group and socioeconomic backgrounds. One-third of the women were adjudicated delinquent, one-third were active in youth organizations, and one-third fell into neither category. The study analyzed the girls' beliefs and feelings on life goals, marriage, children, sex, careers, relationship to adults, permissiveness, peers, drugs and alcohol, youth organizations, school, and social and political involvements. In addition, Dr. Gisela Konopka, the author of this study, is interviewed. She outlines ways of meeting needs of young girls; for example, one way to meet their needs is to enhance their self-esteem through participation in decision making. Selected poetry and quotations from the interviewed girls are interspersed throughout the newsletter. (Author/JR)

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IN THIS ISSUE

The Center Quarterly Focus is on the findings of a 2-year nationwide study of the adolescent girl directed by Dr. Gisela Konopka*.

At an all-day conference October 7, 1975, in the St. Paul Student Center, University of Minnesota, some 500 persons — students, faculty, practitioners — reacted to and discussed in small groups, materials developed out of the study begun in October, 1973.

Supported by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Incorporated, Dr. Konopka and a staff of specially trained researchers in 12 different states undertook to identify the wide variety of needs, aspirations and concerns of young women 12 to 18 years old. The 920 women, interviewed in both rural and urban settings, represented every racial, religious and ethnic group and a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. One-third of the women were adjudicated delinquent, one-third were active in youth organizations, and one-third fell into neither category. An informally structured but open-ended 60-90 minute interview with each girl was taped. Subsequently, these sessions were analyzed according to the girl's views, beliefs and feelings on: education, careers, marriage, children, the women's movement, adults, friends, drugs and alcohol, sexuality, social and political concerns, relationships with adults, experiences with and recommendations for youth organizations.

Three literature searches were completed: (1) a review of the professional literature in the past ten years on adolescent girls, (2) youth agency publications, and (3) fiction written for and read by adolescent women.

Gisela Konopka's book containing her findings and recommendations based on them will be published by Prentice-Hall under the title *Young Girls: A Portrait of Adolescence*, scheduled for December, 1975. Poems by the girls quoted in the following presentation are taken from the forthcoming book.

This Quarterly, which does not purport to cover the wide range of opinions expressed by the girls, is organized into two parts: Gisela Konopka's remarks at the conference (edited for publication), and selected questions and responses relating primarily to practice. Certain findings are dealt with at some length — others, not at all. Questions relating to practice also are limited. However, the questions from the participants do reflect some of the current concerns in their work with adolescents at this time.

NOTE

All of the materials generated by the study are available to scholars, students and practitioners in the offices of the Center for Youth Development and Research. *It is hoped they will be used.* The Related Readings in this Quarterly were taken from the extensive, annotated Bibliography available also in the Center office.

Miriam Seltzer, Editor

ADOLESCENT GIRLS: a two-year study

by Gisela Konopka

I have always maintained that when we set out to talk about people we should first let *them* talk about themselves. I cannot bring 920 girls here to speak to you in person, but I can let a few speak through their poetry. They write beautiful poetry. This poem was written by a 15-year-old girl in a delinquency institution. She talks about herself and her generation.

I am a bottle
Sealed with feeling
too deep for anyone else.
I am a bottle
floating in an eternal ocean of people
trying to help.
I am a bottle
keeping my fragile content inside it,
always afraid of breaking and exposing me.
I am a bottle
frail and afraid of the rock and afraid of the storm,
for if the storm or rocks burst or crack me
I sink and become part of the ocean.
I am a person, I am a person
In the people of the world.

Though I have to generalize about what we found in our study, it is important to remember that *every person is somewhat different from any other.* I

*Gisela Konopka, D.S.W., Professor and Director of the Center for Youth Development and Research.

also want to say at the outset that I am talking about reality — what we actually heard, not necessarily what we wished to hear. This poem by a 16-year-old speaks to individuality.

I used to be a grape in a bunch
and all the other grapes were the same,
But now I am an apple, crisp and fresh
and everyone is different.
My, how life has changed.

These 12- to 18-year-olds were born into national and international strife with the beginning of inflation and depression. The general environment of their parent generation was characterized by prosperity, though it does not follow that all of them participated in prosperity. Their grandparents lived through the depression of the 30's. Each generation grows up in a different kind of context. The girls we interviewed hold high hopes of better justice for all. Their generation comes after the fighting generation, and they are experiencing the mass reaction against the preceding rebellion. They are very self-conscious adolescents, even more so because they are female. Though we rarely heard the girls talk abstractly about their self concepts, everything they said was permeated by their concept of self.

I shall try to report what they said according to what I thought was significant to them: (1) their present drives, their dreams for the future; (2) their family, important as a supporting and limiting power; (3) their friends, important as mirrors of themselves; (4) the organizations they joined; (5) the school, again important as a supporting and limiting power; and (6) the political and social scene.

LIFE GOALS

Marriage

This generation of young women wants both marriage and a career. They have thought it through in rather a calm way. In general they do not expect to marry early. "I want to get married when the time comes and the time is right. I don't want to rush it because I want to make sure. It's like if there was a problem you have to pay so much money to get a divorce and I don't think it's right. If two people love each other they should be able to stay together without those laws between them." I'm not saying there will be no teenage marriages, but on the average they think after 22 is a good time to get married. One thing stands out: marriage means a great deal to them but they do not want to be married to a domineering male. Again there are exceptions, but this is feared with great realism, particularly in the poverty area. "I would rather be more like friends with my husband. That comes first." "I just want to marry someone who shares a lot of the same interests I do and we can get along with each other."

Children

Many girls want children, but they know they have a choice as to when and how many. Most of them wanted three; many wanted fewer, very few wanted more. They thought of raising children mostly in terms of very young children. This business of really raising a human being had not sunk in very deeply.

Divorce

We found an extraordinary fear of divorce. When they talked freely this terrible fear came through. Typical statements: "What is the use of getting married if you just get divorced?" "The children will be hurt."

Careers

The choice of careers is influenced by life experiences — by what we might call adult models. Organizations and schools have given them very little conscious exposure to such models. Counselors in schools seemed to be especially ineffective. "Talking to them is like talking to a brick wall." White collar jobs are preferred. The most tradition-bound group were the adjudicated girls.

SEX

Sex is talked about very calmly by most of the girls. They accept themselves as sexual beings. This is not to say they all wanted to have premarital sex, but practically all of them were very tolerant of others who do. Even if they said, "That's not for me," they were tolerant. "I want to wait until I get married, but I don't look down on a friend."

There was enormous fear, however, of being used sexually. They believed a boyfriend should be an equal, a friend, "gentle, nice, someone who listens." *Listens* was written large. Practically none of the girls would want to just go from one love affair to another.

Sexual abuse; incest

We found that first sex experiences which had been disastrous and harmful usually happened to girls in their own homes. I'm not talking exclusively of incest. Sometimes it was the father, of course, but often it was a brother, another relative, or the mother's boyfriend. The tragedy is that these girls, when they run away from an intolerable situation, are treated as offenders, not as victims. We do exactly the most harmful thing in such a situation: we put them into institutions where they are separated completely from men and cannot learn any healthy relationship to the other sex. Furthermore, they are labeled. As one of the girls said, "Well, if they put me there, I am bad." This increases their sense of inferiority. They become outcasts.

Pregnancy before marriage

The attitude of most of the girls toward pregnancy before marriage again is one of tolerance. This is not a militant generation. Many would want to keep the child, but tend to think of the child only as a baby. Some talk about adoption. They discuss abortion openly. About half of the group were strongly for abortion, half were strongly against it.

Sex information was incredibly poor — an absolute disgrace in 1975. To be sure, there were exceptions. One girl said, "When I first found out I was pregnant I didn't even know what pregnant meant and I went to the nurse and she told me 'that means you're going to have a little baby,' and I said 'What?' And then I told my parents and then I thought I had really been bad." Many did not even know about menstruation.

To summarize, I don't think we found a sex revolution, but there is greater tolerance for premarital sex. There is still an enormous need to help people understand sex. The institutionalized girl was the worst off. She had gone through horrible experiences and most of the time was a victim. She was treated as the offender and made to feel an outcast.

RELATIONSHIP TO ADULTS

Generation gap

I would like to discuss the relationship of the girls to adults in terms of three myths that we must destroy. One is the

much publicized generation gap. Naturally there is always a generation difference, but I would not say it is a great gap. The values the girls hold are often quite similar to those of the adult world. What they expect of people is what we expect of people, too. Negative qualities of adults they mentioned were "phony, nosey, grouchy, greedy, self-conscious; they stereotype us, they don't like us." Positives named included "fun to be with, understanding, respect us, will listen, care, trust us and deserve trust, are patient, fair and just."

Relationship to parents

The second myth is that the family is totally falling apart, that young people want to get out of the family. We found they want a family very badly, yearn for a family if they don't have it. A girl who was thrown out by her family said in a poem: "Loneliness is missing your family, it's not knowing what to say."

Really surprising to us was that the most significant adult named by a majority of the girls was mother. They want to be related to mother and often have very good relationships with their mother. "She is just fantastic. She can yell at us, but we really respect her. She is always there to help. She understands, she works, and she knows who she is." That last sentence was rather typical. The nonsense about the working mother being the worst is not true. I think young people are quite realistic about parents.

Next in rank among significant adults was father. Yet he showed up as more authoritarian, often less communicative, and tending to lose contact when the girls reach adolescense. Fathers, it was reported, don't want daughters to grow up; they want them to remain their little girl. "Oh, he's quite tolerant about a lot of things, but, oh boy, if I go out, oh my little girl, that shouldn't happen."

Another finding, not startling but exciting, was the warm relationship with the grandparent generation. These are real people whom the girls love. This is also true of uncles and aunts. "I can talk with them. My grandmother tells me she wasn't always good, but my mother would never say that."

Permissiveness

The third myth I want to hit hard is that this is a permissive society. We found incredibly authoritarian families, the vast majority in fact. We found the battered adolescent. "When I do something wrong he beats the shit out of me. If I wouldn't clean the table right, or especially if I talked back, or if I started to cry or showed any feeling, my stepfather would beat me up." Or, "She wouldn't let me go nowhere. She beat me with braided ropes, extension cords, yardsticks, boards, whatever she could find when she was mad." A girl described being brought in by police for something she had done. The parents turned to the policeman and said, "What would you do?" He said, "Well, if she were my girl I'd give her a good beating with a police belt." "All right," the father said, "give me the belt" (it has a big buckle) and in front of everybody the girl is beaten with the belt. She gets hysterical, falls on the floor, starts laughing and laughing. The more she laughs the more they beat her. Then she walks upstairs and vomits all day. Again, as with sex offenses, these girls are not treated as victims, always as offenders. With some exceptions, the treatment in delinquency institutions is abominable. Too much still is done to degrade the girls. One girl said, "My mother always told me, 'Whenever you see anyone crying, just try to talk to them.' But up here you can't do it because they will start yelling at you, 'You shut your mouth or you will get three days strict you know.' Being locked up, that's the worst. You can't get out, you can't say what you want, you can't do what you want. They bust teenagers for just anything. There is nothing you can do. They're just over you." The hate such conditions create is illustrated by one girl's solution: "Blow everybody up and get people to know what they are doing." Some institutions do try to provide help, especially those that are smaller. Quoting another interviewee: "Our counselor here will try to help you. If you don't want to go to her you can talk to one of the girls."

F

An important subject we explored was how adolescent girls feel about their peers. What about the loneliness that showed up so strongly in my previous study?* It is still there. Friends of their own age are very important, but adults are just as important. The girls stressed that friends must be trustworthy and you must be able to talk to them. That goes for both boys and girls, not just girls. What they do when they are with friends is pretty much the same, whether the group includes boys or not. Some have sex relations, but they want the boy also as a *friend*. The delinquent girls talked a great deal about how their boyfriends support them, give them some sense of value. This prop is taken away the moment they are placed in an institution. These girls also suffer from distrust by the community. One interviewee who had become pregnant before marriage was not allowed to go to the same school she had attended, a youth organization of which she was a member immediately excluded her, the parents of her friends did not allow their daughters to communicate with her, and she became a total isolate. This kind of thing we heard frequently.

We found few gang activities. Where they existed, girls were part of the gang, not just the auxiliary. Though there was violence in the gangs and they retaliated with violence, most girls disliked the violence.

Suicide attempts were frequent in our survey population. The reasons are the same as those found in any other population. Enormous loneliness, which we find again among the aged, is one. I was interested in a couplet quoted to us by girls across the country:

Loneliness is a silent jail
Without cellmates, parole or bail.

Other reasons for suicide attempts were severe conflicts, either with the boyfriend or with the parents. Occasionally they were related to depressive drugs, especially alcohol. I am often asked if we found much homosexuality or lesbianism. The answer is we didn't. We certainly found it in the delinquency institutions, but all of us know it flourishes there because of the total segregation from boys. Oddly enough, in terms of attitudes, homosexuality was the most disliked quality. Tolerance about sex did not seem to extend to homosexuality or lesbiansim.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Not surprisingly, we found an increase in alcohol use, partially because there is less conflict with society about it and partially because it is often fostered by the parents. The girls themselves stressed the negative effects of hard drugs. They see them as a danger, but as for marijuana — most of them hardly consider it a drug. They want it to be legalized. Half of the girls said

*Konopka, Gisela. *The Adolescent Girl in Conflict.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966.

they do not use drugs but they all knew of them. That applies just as much to rural areas as to urban areas. A question we asked was: "Why do you think girls take drugs? Is it different from why boys take drugs?" They said no, it was kind of the same: curiosity, peer pressure, finding drugs agreeable. But they thought boys also take drugs to prove their masculinity. Whether they evaluated the boys correctly I don't know.

We thought drug information often increased curiosity, but on the other hand it showed quite well the different effects drug use can have. We felt that strong motivation is required to stop taking drugs. "My boyfriend doesn't want me to take drugs and I want to please him." Or "I want to have healthy children, so that's why I stopped." They feel they cannot talk to adults about drugs. Most of them thought their parents did not know it when they took drugs. Among girls who belonged to youth organizations (one-third of our sample) most knew about or had taken drugs, but they said, "Oh my goodness, we would never mention it there!"

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

My first impression when I looked at this part of the material was: this is really catastrophic! They are terribly self-concerned, they don't know how to participate in the political scene, they are disenchanted about things political, they don't feel responsible as citizens. After more careful reading of the material and discussion with my researchers, I recognized that first of all we must think of adolescence as a period of basic self-concern anyhow. Second, many adults do not participate in the political scene either. We were interviewing at the height of Watergate, so that had a strong influence. Finally, we have to remember that the girls actually were very concerned about issues but they did not know how to translate their concern into action. This was the first time they had been asked what their thoughts were. They talked about war, about government cheating, about race relations, and about issues relating to youth — e.g., the draft and the juvenile court. We also talked with them about the women's movement. Very often they saw only the extremes in the movement, which they didn't care for. But when we probed a little deeper we saw that they have simply accepted as their due what others fought for: equal pay for equal work, open opportunities for women, etc. So although they are not revolutionaries, they are involved, as this poem illustrates. It was written by a 16-year-old who has dropped out of school but wants very much to be a lawyer.

You talk about the problems of the world
and I am not allowed to speak because I am just a little girl.
But there is something I would like to say to you, you know
It's my world too.
You think that you can understand more than anyone at all
But mister, you are really short when you think you are tall.
And I'm not allowed to give my opinions because I'm not as big as you.
Try not to forget
It's my world too.
They talk about young people all the time
But they don't think of others who are out of line
And some problems mean nothing to you
But while I am living here
It's my world too.
What I want is the best for everyone
Cuz thinking of yourself is not good in a long run.
So think about what you want for me and you
And while you are thinking, remember
It's my world too.

SCHOOL

School was often seen as very positive, mostly because the girls find friends there. Race discrimination hurts deeply, especially when teachers insult minority girls or show fear of them. Their anger at being treated differently flares out. "What do they think I am, an animal?" Many girls experience enjoyment in school. When we asked what they expect of school they spoke of friendship and understanding, but also of learning. Often the subjects they preferred were those we consider difficult. Exceptions were the delinquent girls who usually have been treated abominably and feel that school has nothing for them.

YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

We found it rather sad that youth organizations seem to have little meaning to the girls. In general they found them childish. Perhaps the most serious finding was an indirect one: when we asked them about significant adults, two girls out of 920 named two people from youth serving organizations. The girls do not think they can talk with youth workers if they have problems. "Organizations are only for the good ones."

I read an article recently stating that nobody knows what kind of people we want to develop. If we don't know that, then I think we should really give up. Every society has to decide what kind of people it wants. To my thinking it is really quite simple. I go to the ideals of the Bill of Rights, which I did not invent: (1) an open free society based on the proposition that the purpose of government is to advance and protect human rights; (2) a representative form of democratic government which means that citizens must be encouraged to participate in their own fate and have the necessary knowledge to do so, otherwise it will not survive; (3) a society ruled by law; (4) an egalitarian non-discriminatory society with equal opportunity for everybody; (5) a pluralistic society with opportunity for groups to have a variety of life styles without harming others or feeling that one or the other style is inferior. If we combine these ideals we get a sense of direction, a sense of how to deal with our youth in the family, in schools, in youth organizations and in corrections. The time has passed for rigid, laid-out programs for young people. Most significant are the *people* who work with them. They not only must understand these youngsters but must consciously see how they themselves relate to people. They must be able to listen to and respect young people and permit their genuine participation. I felt very strongly that these young girls were asking us not only to listen to them but to convey something of the meaning of life to them. They want to talk, they want to think things through, they want absolute honesty.

The young people we talked to were very sober. We must help them feel that there is hope, that there is compassion, that joy and commitment actually are possible. So I will end with a thought from Morris West who understands the stark reality of life but also understands its beauty.

To reject the joy of living is to insult Him who provides it,
And who gave us the gift of laughter along with the gift of tears.

Our young population has that gift. We squelch it far too often; we do not enhance it enough.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS RELATED TO PRACTICE

Dogma and Direction

Q: How do we move between the two extremes of trying to impose ideals upon young people (making them what we think they should be) and not giving them any direction at all?

G.K. This seems to me to be one of the philosophic questions that I hope everybody can go back and discuss with the girls themselves. To think through the difference between dogma and direction is an exciting experience at almost any age. I don't expect we will ever find the complete answer. But if our ideal is a population capable of making choices on two grounds (1) consideration of other people and (2) facts, then we have to learn to look at facts, to assess them, and to develop a measuring stick for making choices. I think we can help people learn how to make choices without imposing our own styles on them. We must allow them a large number of alternatives.

Building Trust

Q: In what ways can a worker cooperatively build trust between group and leader?

G.K. First of all, you surely don't build trust with gimmicks. Kids very quickly spot phoniness. I don't learn trust in a weekend therapy session, by falling back blindfolded and being caught before I drop. Since the whole "bag" at that moment is to create trust, I assume they won't let me drop. Does that mean I can trust the next guy I meet in the community who wants to cut my throat if I disagree with him? No.

Another way some of us try to build trust is by sitting across the desk from a person saying, "You know I understand who you are and what you think, and you must trust me." It doesn't work. Trust is built slowly, through experience. When you are working with people, be honest. By that I don't mean be brutal. But be open; don't pretend the world is all good when you know it is not. When they need you, be available. It takes time to build trust.

If you are asking me how to build trust with very distrustful young people I would need an hour to discuss it. You have to undo so much. But it is not as difficult as most adults seem to think. What came out over and over in our study was this incredible yearning to have somebody to talk to.

Meeting Needs — Toward Greater Effectiveness

Q. Should every girls' organization try to meet all the needs of all girls, or are there some basic needs or concerns that all organizations should broaden their base to meet?

G.K. In my opinion no organization and no individual can ever serve all the needs of all the people. That's impossible. So it's all right sometimes to say we will just cut out a certain slice from the whole pie and, let's say, provide services for a particular neighborhood, or serve girls in a particular area of interest. What I think is dangerous, though, is separation on the basis of delinquency or race or ethnic background.

Now, are there basic needs all organizations should meet? I think so. We may not always agree on all needs and concerns but we have to know them and develop our thinking and our programs around them, based on some philosophy. I talked about this in the *Bill of Rights* context. For instance, if we believe people must be able to make choices, otherwise our democracy will die, then it behooves all organizations to provide experience in making choices rather than having authoritarian leaders who set the program and expect everyone to work by the book.

If we agree that self-esteem is the basis for respecting other people, then we have to provide the ingredients which enhance self-esteem: real participation in decision-making, for instance, not just asking for opinions; genuine acceptance of young people as equals, not just as pre-adults. We can translate almost every one of these basic "shoulds" or ideals, combine them with what we understand, and make them part of our programs.

So, I would say all youth organizations have to fulfill some of the basic needs of human beings and serve a wide variety of young people, yet they cannot reach all of them.

Q. You mentioned earlier that the girls had quit some of the organizations when they were in junior high school. Can you elaborate on that -- what they liked about some organizations and disliked about others?

G.K. Okay, what do they like? Written very big is opportunity for adventure — the real possibility to get out and do things that are different, not the tame camping or the usual kind of summer program. I don't mean necessarily running the rapids but just going somewhere else, meeting totally different people, discussing new and exciting things. Wish for excitement is very big in that age range.

I don't usually name names, but 4-H got a good press so I'll use it as a concrete example. One thing the girls liked there was the coed organization which allowed them to be with boys at some times. We found kind of a general feeling: "No, we don't want always to be with boys but we like to have the opportunity to work with them and not just to party with them." Second, they liked individualized projects — not programs where everybody has to do the same thing. They liked the feeling of doing something distinct and getting recognition for it. Third, they liked being allowed to travel. "It wasn't just going on a vacation. We did something, we exhibited something, we worked on something together, and we were somewhere else." Being involved in actual helping also is important to them, as is the kind of adult they meet. Their most negative reaction is to the adult who treats them like little kids and looks down on them.

I think all organizations could be more effective. One of my great hopes is that we will get away from the notion of compartmentalization — school is for learning, youth organizations are for fun, parents are for nurture. We have to work together and eliminate the jealousies among us. For that we need the right kind of people. Partially they have to be found, but partially they can also be developed through training. At the Center we are starting a two-year project, funded by the Lilly Endowment, Incorporated, in which we hope to train 400 significant personnel within eight youth-serving organizations plus some staff from corrections.

Reaching Troubled Adolescents

Q: Do you have any ideas on how organizations and resources can better reach troubled adolescents?

G.K. First of all, do not segregate them. Why do we call one "troubled" and another "untroubled?" I have not yet seen an adolescent who is not troubled at times. In fact, I have not seen a person who is not troubled at times, regardless of age, but in adolescence everything is worse. It's a more touchy age. Almost every experience is brand new. The ability to see failure in perspective has not yet been developed. For instance, you have fallen in love and the boy leaves you. You haven't experienced this before and you are ready to commit suicide. In contrast, I feel scared before I give a speech but I have experienced over and over that somehow it will work out. So I am anxious, but not desperate.

My answer then is: first, don't segregate; second, take the troubles seriously, but don't look on the "troubled" as a group apart; third, understand the enormous range of normalcy. In general, much of what we consider emotionally disturbed is normal.

Q: What are the alternatives to traditional ways of dealing with runaways?

G.K. Certainly they vary. Sometimes we treat runaways as offenders rather than as victims, and then things get worse and worse and worse. I think definitely this has to stop. There have been some very good places for runaways here in the Twin Cities — open places where a girl could go and stay. But some changes are taking place that worry me. The current approach seems to be "now that we have been good enough to take you in, we expect you to bare your soul. Tell us all about yourself." That's not what I call an alternative. Neighborhood houses used to offer people refuge, but few such residences exist any more. Desperately needed, I think, is a network of residences all over the country (not only in the cities) where young people can stay for a time and where they will find helping people to talk to if they wish, but only if they wish. These residences might be called youth hostels — not runaway houses or half-way houses. We who work with youth often have gold in our hands, not yet tarnished by the taste of being something bad. Why label prematurely a person in the making? Just because our young people take to the road we don't have to label them runaways.

Changing Structures That Oppress Youth

Q: What can be done politically to change the structures that oppress youth and especially female youth?

G.K. I do not think that youth is totally "oppressed." Perhaps the most important structure in need of change is the family structure where double standards still prevail. Girls in our study often complained that they were not allowed to go out in the evening but their brother was, or the boy was allowed to hike in summer with a group but the girl wasn't. And this distinction was not made on the basis of age; it was strictly boy/girl. Sexuality is not the only basis for uneven treatment, but it certainly is the strongest one.

I see changing the family structure not so much in terms of making a new structure but rather in terms of moving away from the male dominated authoritarian structure. I also see the family structure as a mirror of the political structure. That means in the old monarchies in authoritarian countries the family followed the same pattern. Most people in this country come from this kind of background where the king was at the helm and below him were the people subservient to him. Now it is odd that change in political structure does not necessarily result in change in other structures. It didn't follow in the family; frequently it didn't follow in the schools. But these are structures that need to be changed.

Another structure that definitely must be changed is the one surrounding status offenses. Boys and girls are brought before the courts because they are not going to school. Americans feel very embarrassed because our delinquency figures are so high. Naturally they are when we count every kid that plays truant as a delinquent. I don't know of any other country which does that. If the status offender (the offender who has committed an act that would not be a crime for an adult) were to be taken off the courts, most girls wouldn't even be offenders. Most of the time they are in that category because of "sexual misconduct" which is not considered misconduct among the boys, even today. This will be changed and the change will come through the legal profession. Who will then take care of these girls? Who will work with them? I say it is the responsibility of people in the neighborhoods and of the youth organizations in the community.

Other structures — vocational education, for instance — need to be changed, too. But enough for now.

Reaching Young People

Q: How can we change our approach to young people so that we can reach them?

G.K. They are not so hard to reach. They want to be reached. They want to be listened to; they don't want to be talked down to; and they don't want to be constantly told that they must be exactly what someone else is. I'll finish up with two illuminating poems. The first is one by a 16-year-old girl, written after she was found in the "gutter," labeled "mentally ill," and placed in a mental hospital.

You aren't normal you know, the fat nurse said accusing me.
No, I don't know, I said heavily under my breath.
She heard me though, as her neck stretched out straining to hear more.
What's your goal in life?
To castrate all the guys in town and marry the women.
Not really, just playing a little game.
She changed the subject because of her uncomfortable position
And fixed her gaze steadily upon my poetry book.
What's your favorite poem?
I hear America sighing.
Isn't it, I hear America singing?
Not the way things are going nowadays, said I, in a flat tone.
The psychos got up for lunch, and she stood there directing the line.
I think she felt safer with them.

How little we know about what goes on beneath the hostility we encounter. How fast she catches our fear . . . From another 16-year-old:

I used to be the cocoon all wrapped up
in what I thought then was safety
insulating myself from all the hurts and joys of life.
Afraid of so much of love, strangers, of being rejected
Of trying new things, of being wrong, of being laughed at.
Or of just being.
Snuggled in my security blanket, I miss so much.
Now I am the worm, just breaking through the cocoon
Crawling slowly, inching my way towards the light.
Crawling a little, a little, each day, I hope.
Trying not to slip back a foot for every inch I gain.
Some day I will be that butterfly, free and glorious,
not afraid of everything I do.

The message I get: Don't make young people feel they have to be afraid; let them be creative; try not to crush the butterfly; let them think, live, be concerned and develop.

RELATED READINGS

Conger, John Janeway. *Adolescence and Youth*. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.
Related physical development and self concept. Outward appearance and inner self-image are more closely bound together for females than for males.

Gottlieb, David, ed. *Youth in Contemporary Society*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1973.
Contributors identify and analyze anticipated trends in youth behavior. Focus is on implications for programs and policies dealing with youth in the decade ahead. Includes good chapter on drugs and one on "the real generation gap."

The Mood of American Youth, 1974. Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1974.
A poll was conducted of 2,000 high school students sampled nationwide by the Gilbert Youth Research Division of Herff-Jones. Outlines the national issues of concern to youth. Reflects a determined and ambitious generation of students who are committed to their own individual goals.

National YWCA Resource Center on Women. *Teen Women Tell About Their Needs*. New York: National Board, YWCA, 1974.
Questionnaires were sent to 1,111 adolescent women and four workshops were held, to determine young women's concerns. Subject areas are: jobs, sex, recreation, drugs, child care, counseling, racism, women's changing roles. Implications for programs are evident. The project was planned and carried out under the leadership of teen women.

The Center Quarterly Focus is published four times a year by the Center for Youth Development and Research, University of Minnesota, to communicate significant current thinking and research on issues and problems concerning youth. Youth is defined as the state in the life cycle that begins in adolescence and continues until adulthood — essentially the period between childhood and economic independence. Manuscripts invited. Gisela Konopka, Director; Miriam Seltzer, Editor; Lillian Jensen, Technical Editor; Terry Anderson, Bibliographic Assistant. Offices at 325 Haecker Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota. Fall 1975.